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# The Workingman's Reward, Chicago's Early Suburbs and the Roots of American Sprawl (review)

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**The Workingman's Reward, Chicago's Early Suburbs  
and the Roots of American Sprawl by Elaine Lewinnek  
(review)**

Michael H. Ebner

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sphere of the founding. Likewise, although Hackett incorporates the scholarly insights of other historians regarding gender and sexuality into his work, he keeps them at an appreciative but safe distance. He pays some attention to changes in gender roles and in the dynamic between the public and the private spheres, but he never explicitly discusses their stability as analytical tools. The book includes the history of African-American fraternalism (and Prince Hall Freemasonry), Native-American Freemasonry, and the participation of Jewish and even Catholic immigrants in the twentieth century, but by treating all of them as completely self-contained stories, in separate chapters, his book runs of the risk of taking for granted the racial and gendered boundaries that are undeniably foundational to Freemasonry and its history. The rich and growing history of Latin American Freemasonry, in and out of the United States, also gets short shrift as a result.

These largely methodological hesitations should not detract from the strengths of the book as a comprehensive study of Freemasonry within the context of U.S. history. The book is particularly strong in its careful attention to historical self-understanding, myth and narrative, historical symbolism, and temporality. Future research on Freemasonry will benefit greatly from it.

Matthew Crow  
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*The Workingman's Reward, Chicago's Early Suburbs and the Roots of American Sprawl.* By Elaine Lewinnek (New York, Oxford University Press, 2014) 239 pp. \$45.00

This book provides readers with an insightful case study of patterns of human habitation in metropolitan Chicago. Although Lewinnek fixed its chronological parameters between 1860 and 1930, she nonetheless ventures in the direction of contemporary history.

Lewinnek's initial sentence stakes the terrain: "Chicago's first product was real estate." She subsequently elaborates upon the real-estate marketplace, finance, geography, and construction. But this is hardly a book about joints and arches or dollars and cents. What makes the book interesting is Lewinnek's clarification of it as "an analysis of ideas as well as actions." It could have proved a dismal social-scientific treatise filled with theories and statistics. Instead, it introduces "novels and poetry as well as bank records and real estate maps." Nelson Algren, Theodore Dreiser, Henry Blake Fuller, Louise Montgomery, Upton Sinclair, and Richard Wright step onto the stage. Readers will search in vain for Jane Addams—no entry in the index—who inexplicably hardly figures into this book.

Among the strengths of this study is its determination to place race in its storyline. Although this landscape is well known, Lewinnek unflinchingly and deftly manages to integrate race into a broader, much-welcomed

demographic context.<sup>1</sup> The chapter entitled “The Mortgages of Whiteness” revisits the often-told narrative of the race riot of 1919 (“the riot helped move race relations toward a black-white binary”). Lewinnek, to her credit, recounts this narrative at ground level, for example, the paragraph in which she reports that the mean commute to work at the Argo Corn Refining Company for African Americans was one hour and for whites thirty-two minutes.

One aspect of *The Workingmen’s Reward* warrants elaboration. Lewinnek’s spatial sensibilities—inside Chicago, within the area commonly known as suburban Cook County, and the five outer counties—are lacking. To be sure, she rightfully labels the key word *suburban* as a recurring trope subject to change. Chicago’s great annexation of 1889 admittedly complicates the narrative. But for all of Lewinnek’s keen attention to mapping and ecology in Chapter 5, at times she might have covered a broader geographical plane. Geddes, who wrote at the turn of the last century, stated the matter of metropolitan geography succinctly: “[I]t takes the whole region to make the city.” It is not always clear whether Lewinnek situates readers within Chicago’s boundaries or beyond them. To this point, the six maps in this chapter—dating back in some instances to the nineteenth century—disappoint. In an age when the nexus of cartography and digital production offers endless, inexpensive possibilities, twenty-first century visuals would have been most welcome, and appropriate, in this book.

*The Workingmen’s Reward*, in spite of these concerns, is an insightful, thought-provoking, and highly readable book. It will surely appeal to those focused on cities and their diverse real-estate marketplaces. Lewinnek is especially adept at populating her narrative with the variety of people—buyers, sellers, and tenants—who contended with the complex, and even humiliating, contingencies entailed in their pursuit of satisfying human habitation.

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*Fueling the Gilded Age: Railroads, Miners, and Disorder in Pennsylvania Coal Country.* By Andrew B. Arnold (New York, New York University Press, 2014) 277 pp. \$49.00

Arnold takes us into the bituminous coal-mining areas of central Pennsylvania during the last three decades of the nineteenth century. Coal mining in this part of Pennsylvania largely has escaped the notice of historians—remaining in the shadows of the great anthracite coal region to the

1 For books about race and Chicago, see, for example, James Grossman, *A Land of Hope: Chicago, Black Southerners, and the Great Migration* (Chicago, 1991); Arnold Hirsch, *Making the Second Ghetto: Race and Housing in Chicago 1940–1960* (Chicago, 1983); Amanda I. Seligman, *Block by Block: Neighborhoods and Public Policy on Chicago’s West Side* (Chicago, 2005); William Tuttle, *Race Riot: Chicago in the Red Summer of 1919* (Chicago, 1996).